

Stop Calling Them Chores!

A premium guide to introducing the joy of responsibility, cooperation, and life skills for parents with children of any age.



Thank You

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Cheers,

The Birth2Work Family

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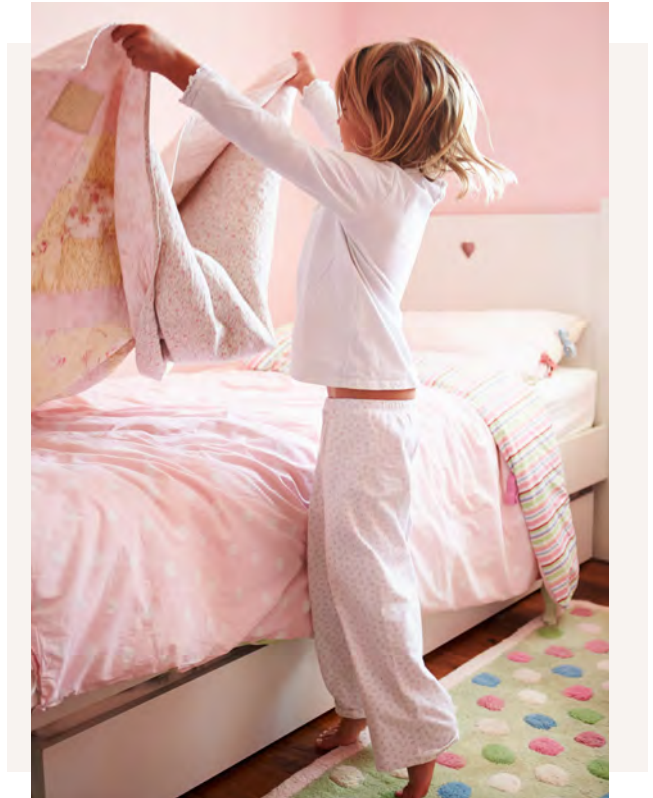
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Introduction

“Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege,
than the raising of the next generation.”

- C. Everett Koop

Introduction

Imagine how it would feel to not spend half your waking hours picking up after your children. Be it LEGO bricks or laundry, dishes or devices, the act of leaving items around the house (or worse, losing them in a public place) can feel like blatant carelessness and disrespect on the part of our kids.

By the time your kids are young adults, it's easy to forget that just because they are physically capable of doing most anything an adult can, it doesn't necessarily mean they have the life experience to ensure they make the same good choices you would with their finances, social behavior, or material possessions.

But let's be honest, personal responsibility is a skill many adults have yet to master. So how can we expect our kids to be any different?

The truth is, like every skill, it is something achieved through years of practice and as the result of having had good modeling.

It takes just as much commitment on your part as the family leader to follow through with the behaviors you want to see in your child as it does for them to actually do them.

In this guide you'll find practical examples of

- how to model successful behavior;
- developmental milestones that relate to building and maintaining good habits;
- having realistic conversations;
- steps you can take to help your child successfully develop **respect for** and **care of** themselves and their possessions;
- strategies to introduce consequences (different than punishments) to behavior.



The Benefits

Personal responsibility is a life skill. It's one of those things that makes independence realistic for our children.

This guide isn't just about convincing your children to do their chores. It's about helping you, the family leader, reach a place with your children where they understand the value of their possessions, the consequences of losing them or treating them carelessly, and how their contribution to maintaining a healthy and happy home is vital to everyone's happiness.

The extraordinary mental health benefits of maintaining a clean and organized home have been well documented. Your children may not consciously understand that, but they can feel the effects of it.

Life becomes infinitely easier when your space is organized to a level where you know where to find your possessions at any given time. When everything is put away clean, in working order, and ready to use, stress in the home is reduced dramatically.

Things won't always be perfect. Basic order in our lives, however, means less stress, wasted time, and wasted money—benefits we can all appreciate.

Individual Life Skills Learned:

1. Care for their living space
2. Appreciation for work required to keep a space clean
3. Organization
4. Environmental responsibility
5. Critical thinking skills
6. Asking for help from others or professionals when needed
7. Sequential thinking
8. Financial responsibility
9. Planning skills
10. Maintaining health

Bonus Family Benefits:

1. Family values shared
2. Less time and money spent on looking for or replacing items
3. Less sense of entitlement
4. More satisfaction with the possessions already owned

Introduction

The Road Map

at 1-3 years old:

1. Organize their space on their level so they can accomplish tasks independently.
2. Include them in your process in order to show them the correct way to do something.
3. Include cleaning up as part of your regular play routine.

at 4-8 years old, the previous and:

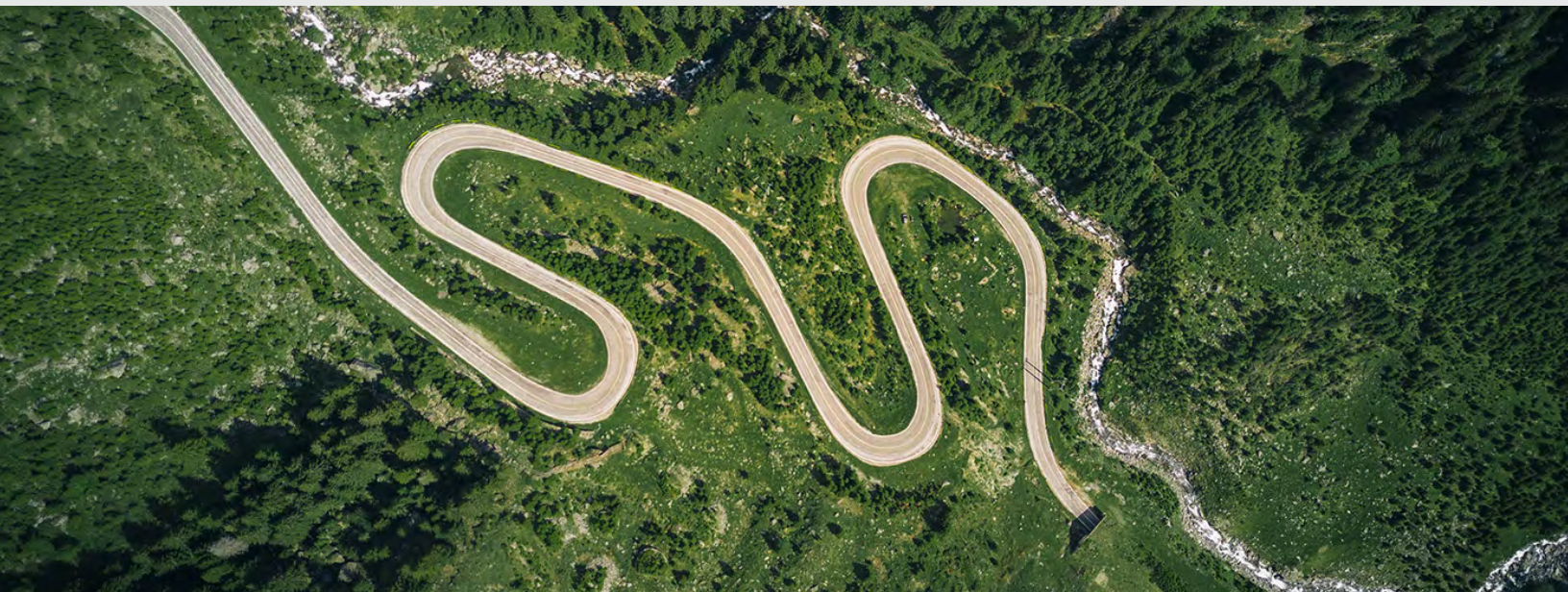
1. Gradually introduce more responsibility as capabilities develop.
2. Use appropriate language frequently and consistently to reinforce your message.
3. Allow them to experiment with more complex household jobs.

at 9-12 years old, the previous and:

1. Distinguish between acts that are good for themselves versus good for the whole family.
2. Introduce financial consequences to irresponsible behavior.
3. Increase challenges and allow for complete cycles from planning to execution to consequences (positive or negative).

at 13-18 years old, the previous and:

1. Increase accountability for time and resource management and the associated consequences.
2. Continue to help your teen learn about the value of time, behavior, and getting a job.
3. Introduce them to the concept and value of mentors, philanthropy, and community service.





CHAPTER 01

1-3 Years Old

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

- Abraham Lincoln

One

Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

For some it may seem impossible to teach a toddler personal responsibility. To the contrary, it's pretty easy. At this age it's not about sitting down for a face-to-face with your child for a detailed explanation. You don't even really need to explain it yet. You just do it. That's the benefit of starting this process early in life.

When your child is old enough to crawl around and pull their toys out of bins and pull their books off the shelves, they are old enough to **put. them. back.**

Take advantage of relevant developmental milestones to encourage the regular practice of putting things away and establishing routines to maintain order.

Useful Developmental Milestones:

- At 12 to 18 months old, brain development and organization is strengthened by repetitive grasping of the thumb and forefinger.

... **Picking up toys and small objects helps with hand-eye coordination and dexterity. Use that to your advantage and spend lots of time picking up scattered items.**

- At just 18 to 24 months old, children want to help with household tasks. They are learning to imitate the behaviors of people around them.

... **Include them in cleanup time as a regular part of your daily practice.**

- At 2 to 3 years old, children recognize the emotions of others in their lives and in books.

... **Do your best to express the value of maintaining your home and possessions even when the process is less than ideal. We don't all love to clean all the time. However, seeing you overcome your own frustrations in a positive way (i.e., doing the work anyway without screaming or hitting) models the behavior you most likely want your child to express on their own.**



One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

Do This for Success

1. Organize their space on their level. If you've created the ideal nursery for yourself, it's likely not very usable by your young child. Reorganize that nursery or play area with the goal of making things easier for your child to access. You'll save untold hours in the future by helping them to become responsible for sorting and putting away their clothing, books, and toys now! —

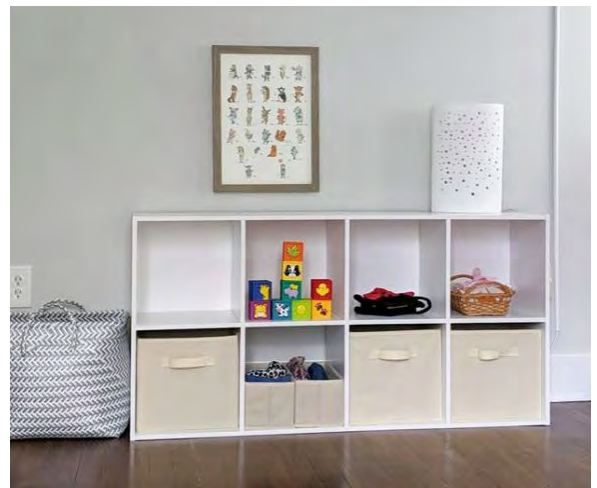
Keep It Low

Lower things in the child's room or play area to their level. Your crawler/toddler will only be able to keep the space in order if they can easily reach everything and have places to put their things away.

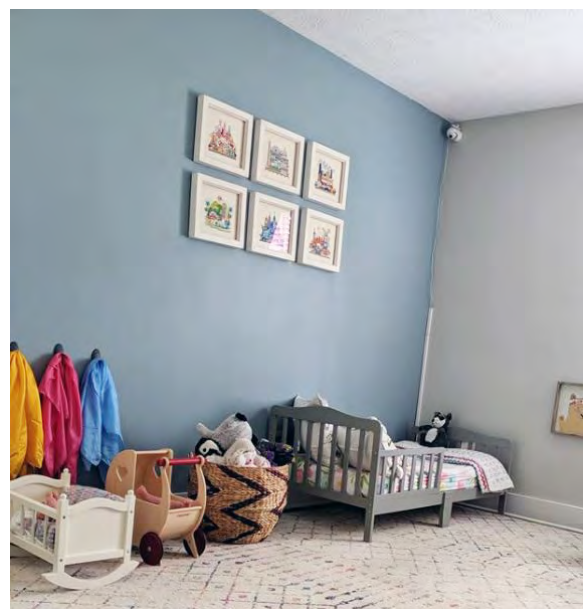
EXAMPLE:

Look for ways to store pants, T-shirts, and pj's that are an alternative to big dressers. Try a low shelf with big cubby spaces for cloth or plastic drawers. They are roomy and can help to keep things neat in the room.

Try removing heavy closet doors and lower the hanging rods to the child's height. Use small, children's hangers for clothing that will be easier for small hands to use.



Source: [@casa.dei.maymay](https://www.instagram.com/casa.dei.maymay)



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One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

Leave Room

Choice can be overwhelming and doesn't support the efforts of a small child who can't easily move other things out of the way in order to access what they want or return things to their correct position.

EXAMPLE:

It's tempting to try and pack as many books on a shelf as it will hold, but little hands and fingers can't easily access the books like that.



Source: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

This setup is difficult for small hands to reach what they're after. Reducing the number of book to just one deep will help.



Source: [@casa.dei.maymay](https://www.instagram.com/casa.dei.maymay)

More space and fewer options make this setup far more accessible to a child.

One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

Make It Clear

Place objects that are similar in the same storage space. Cut out, print, or take pictures of the objects and fasten it onto the front side of their storage space. This will help your child locate the right place to find or return their toys, books, and clean pairs of socks.

After age 3, write the words for the objects on the pictures in big, bold, black letters for word recognition.



Source: Germanpearls.com

Here's a great [tutorial](#) on how to make the bins pictured above.

EXAMPLE:

If your child loves toy cars or trains, take a picture of a few favorites, and pin or clip the picture to the front of the box so that your child recognizes them, knows where to find them, and where to put them away.

Practice with them and model matching the items to the pictures. Soon this will become second nature.

One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

2. Let them figure it out. It can take an extraordinary amount of patience to stand back and let your child figure something out for themselves. It is also one of the most important things you can do to help them develop pride in their own capabilities.

Give Them Time

If it takes three minutes to hang up one shirt, give them those minutes. Your child is working through complex coordination functions in their developing brains. When we swoop in to finish a job more quickly or more efficiently, we are robbing them of the pride of accomplishment and contribution to the family.



Ask Questions First

Use open-ended questions to involve your child in the problem solving process. “What are you missing? Where do we usually keep that? What do we do next?” This puts the responsibility back on the child to consider his role in how problems get solved.

One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

Success Story

When our daughter was about 10 months old, she could easily crawl around the living room, where her books and a few toys lived. Like Scrooge McDuck rolling around in his gold coins, she loved to pull down everything she knew to be hers into one big pile.

So, one evening at the end of her revelry (but before she herself was a big pile of exhausted baby mess) we began by saying, "OK, sweetheart. You did such a great job of getting all these things out to play, it's time now to put all these things back where they go." And she made a face at us, cocking her head to the side like a confused pug dog.

"You want me to what?" is the question she conveyed, since she couldn't yet say it. Dad started by handing her one book and he said, "Please take this book and put it back on that shelf." She took the book from him alright, then she put it down on the ground next to her.

He tried again. Same result. He tried again by walking with her, with the book in her hand, to the shelf, and then putting it down. She was not as interested in this part of the playtime. She tried walking away.

We called her back and sat still. She tried communicating in her way that she was

hungry. We said, "No problem! We'll get you a snack right after we finish here." She tried throwing a fit. We just waited, not agitated.

She had to roll through all the tricks up her tiny, adorable sleeve first, just to see if we were serious. Then, after about 45 minutes, she started putting books away more efficiently. Then the toys. And then there were LOTS of hugs and the requested snack.



It's not been sunshine and roses every day since then, but she's clear that the putting away part is not someone else's job. It's simply part of the play process. It's paid off at school too. When she's done with a project, she gets stuff put away and gets out to play faster.

She doesn't have the understanding yet to say, "Thanks for teaching me to be personally responsible when I was 10 months old!" But she does say, "I don't know why they don't just put away their stuff so they can play faster!"

~ Former [Leading Your Child to Success](#) Parent

One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

The End Goal

Engaging young children in routines and daily activities gives them a sense of security because they know what to expect and what is expected of them. By giving these responsibilities to young children, you are building self-confidence in them to know that they are capable of doing things on their own and are valued members of the family team. This builds them up to become self-sufficient.

EXAMPLE:

1. Every morning, children at 2 and 3 can straighten the pillows and covers on their bed (if you've given them a low toddler bed). Then, they can put their pj's away and pick up any clothes left out from yesterday and put them into a short hamper with a picture of dirty clothes on its front.
2. During the day, children can help with dishes, dusting, plants, pets, and shopping. With preparation and clear, consistent language from you, their innate need to be involved can be translated into an enjoyable game rather than a constant frustration.
3. Each evening, before bath or story time, any toys left out are put away in their places and the books left out will be put back on their shelf or in a tub or cubby.
4. They will choose one or two of their favorite books for their story time later.



One: Lessons for 1-3 Years Old

Enforcing Consequences:

At this stage, success is really determined by you. Toddlers need to practice doing the same activity over and over again in order to cement the behavior. **Be patient and realistic with your expectations.**

Like the success story for this chapter, enforcement of the desired behavior may simply look like not progressing to the next activity until items are put away.

In the language you use with your child, include the message that taking care of the home together is a part of being on the family team.

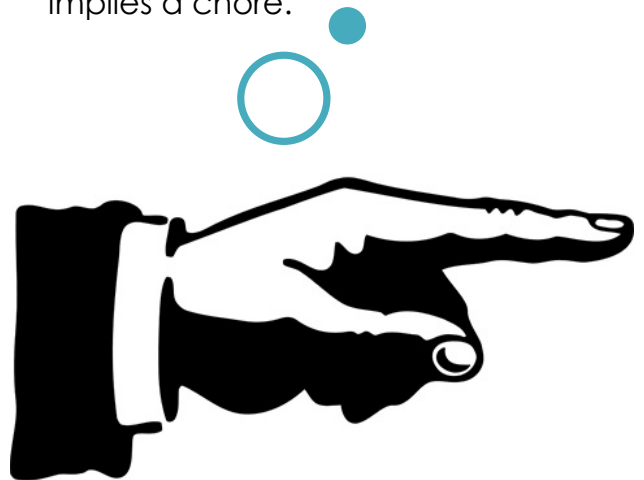
For acts of outright rebellion—throwing items that need to be put away or running out of the room—**try taking a “together time-out.”**

Instead of putting them somewhere by themselves, diffuse the situation and sit with them. Be clear that the time is not a punishment but rather a barrier to progressing to other activities. Nothing should progress until they can be calm and respectful for at least one minute.

Remember that at this age there is no willful intent to defy you. Their brains aren't wired for that kind of behavior yet. They're honestly testing boundaries.

Family Leadership Summary:

1. Organize their space on their level so they can accomplish tasks independently.
2. Include them in your process in order to show them the correct way to do something. Don't expect perfection.
3. Include cleaning up as part of your regular play routine.
4. Establish routines and gradually introduce responsibility to build self-confidence and independence.
5. Use positive language with regard to your own work so as not to establish a negative attitude. Children will pick up on that message very easily. With a bright voice try saying, “We get to clean up now!” instead of “We *have* to clean up now.” The first implies a fun activity, the other implies a chore.



What Can My Child Do?

EXERCISE

Below are some examples of what kids 1 to 3 years old can realistically accomplish on their own. The results won't be perfect, but the intention and practice of the behavior is most important. Use the space on the right to add your own notes about where your toddler excels and where he or she may need some extra support.

1-2 years old possibilities ...

- put toys away
- put books away
- put dirty clothes in hamper
- wipe up spills
- observe and listen to your behavior

2-3 years old possibilities ...

above plus ...

- dust
- take dishes to and from the table
- help prepare food with small tools
- carry lunch container into school
- take off shoes and coat and store appropriately
- water plants
- match socks/fold towels/put away laundry (with guidance)
- wash hands/body and dry off
- get dressed/undressed
- help care for a pet
- think through a problem
- throw trash, recycling, and compost in correct containers

Notes and Ideas



CHAPTER 02

4-8 Years Old

"I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation, every possession, a duty."

- John D. Rockefeller

Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

By this stage in life, there are expectations of your child. At home, at friends' homes, and at school, junior should be able to put stuff away. You aren't doing your child any favors by not consistently holding them accountable to this practice. Nor are you doing yourself any favors by excusing irresponsible behavior ("She's only 5!" you say), because you end up giving yourself more work. Hold on to your seat belts, friends, because the time is now.

Your child also has more capacity now than as a toddler. Putting away the things they just got out is the first step in personal responsibility, but actually expanding their responsibilities to include additional care of the home is appropriate, too.



Useful Developmental Milestones:

- Between 4 and 5 years old, children particularly enjoy rhythm and rhyming songs with music.
 - ... **Borrow songs from school or make up your own to make household and personal duties more fun.**
- Between 5 and 6 years old, children are often overly confident in their abilities. They also have a great need to be taken seriously.
 - ... **Let them be your assistant out on weekend errands. They can check off lists or be in charge of remembering important items.**
- Between 6 and 7 years old, children begin to understand the viewpoint of others.
 - ... **Discuss a playground incident with your child, and ask questions to consider a friend's feelings.**
- Between 7 and 8 years old, children are more able to follow complex directions in sequence.
 - ... **Start with a simple routine in your family life, go over the steps, and then let your child complete the task (e.g., collect the garbage bins, empty them in the bin outside, replace the bags, return the bins to their spot).**

Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

Do This for Success

- 1. Have the talk.** No, not *that* talk. The talk—establishing your expectations of your child and why—is paramount at this age and stage. Your language should be clear, consistent, and honest. You're explaining a rule of the home, not the basis for all responsibility.

EXAMPLE:

"Our home is a shared space. No one in the family gets to leave all their stuff out for other people to put away, right? It takes all of us doing our part to make our home function well.

So, you need to do your part now by putting away your things. And there are more ways you can help make things work for us all after that!"



Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

Family Leadership Tips:

1. Say it with excitement! This is not a punishment talk. It's just the way things are. Your child will be thrilled to be included in the management of the home, even if not overly thrilled about putting their things away. Hold firm, though. This is a critical moment in the future functionality of your home and your child's anchoring within it.
2. Don't wait to have "the talk" until the clock is running out and you must move on to the next activity. Transitions can be extremely disrupting for kids, so give plenty of time for the cleanup process to unfold. Try a version of the sample statement above before the toys are even off the shelves. Starting playtime with an expectation for what should happen at the end is a useful way to establish expectations and then repeat them as many times as necessary.
3. Anyone who routinely cares for your child (thank you Nana and G-Pa!) should be made aware of your expectations for your child's behavior. Share your version of "the talk" and help the other caregiver come up with complementary language of their own. When other adults show respect for your decisions and uphold your expectations, children get a clear and consistent message of how things are meant to be.



Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

2. Expand their opportunities to take care of their things. Have them fold and put away their own laundry.

Show Them How

Assuming you've created an appropriately accessible space for your child when they were younger—raising things up as they got taller—leave your child's clean laundry on their bed and guide them through putting it all away.

During this process, have them consider the fact that since they have to put it away eventually, perhaps they should really reconsider the four to five outfit changes that happen each day.

Maybe they'll reconsider, or maybe they'll say, "I don't care!" But so long as you don't have to trip over all the outfits on the floor, you won't either.



Family Leadership Tip:

Doing laundry isn't just about washing clothes. Steps that you probably perform from muscle memory are all new to your children. In addition to putting clothes in the hamper a child can ...

4-5 years old:

- fold towels/washcloths
- pair socks
- put clothing in drawers
- button and hang up shirts

5-8 years old:

all of the previous plus ...

- clean the trap and dispose of lint
- add detergent and load washer
- transfer wet wash to dryer or clothesline

Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

3. **Expand their opportunities to take care of themselves.** Have them help (more) in the kitchen.

Spark Their Passion

As children get older and more dexterous, helping in the kitchen realm becomes a no-brainer.

Preparing, consuming, and cleaning up meals is one of the most time-consuming parts of our lives. If these tasks bring joy and inspiration to your life, involving your child in the process is an indispensable way to bond and share stories and family values.

If cooking brings you something other than joy, teaching your children to prepare snacks for themselves and help with the dishes are great ways to unburden your load!

With proper supervision, there's no amount of freedom in this area that isn't a good thing. Will extra yogurt be wasted as they scoop from the Costco-sized container into a bowl? Likely. Will five forks end up in the spoons tray? Maybe. Is it worth the extra effort? Absolutely.

Chopping/prepping/peeling, getting their own breakfast and snacks, setting the table, and putting away clean silverware are all entirely doable from age 4.

Family Leadership Tip:

When kids practice cooking they are also ...

- reading
- measuring
- collaborating
- listening
- doing math
- problem-solving
- exploring
- making memories



Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

Success Story

When our son spent his first night sleeping at a friend's house, we were nervous for all the normal reasons. Would he sleep? Would he freak out without us there? Would he eat dinner? Would he keep the friend awake?

We didn't hear anything overnight and so when we went to get him the next day, we asked the friend's mom nervously, "How did he do?" She exclaimed to us with joy "He can come back ANYTIME he wants! He encouraged Joey to put away their things and wash their hands before helping to set the table for dinner. Joey tried to get out of it, but your son gave him a mini lecture on how important it was for them to get stuff put away before dinner and then be helpful so that maybe after dinner they could have ice cream. That logic worked for all of us!

~ Former [Leading Your Child to Success](#) Parent



Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

The End Goal

Patently guiding your child through efficient and clear ways of doing things helps them feel empowered in their own homes. If they are practiced at putting their own things away, they get more benefits at school, they certainly get welcomed back to other people's homes more often, and they learn how to keep up with their own stuff.

You release yourself from the burden of answering the "Mom! Where's my (fill in the blank)?" when you release yourself from the burden of picking up after them. You don't have to buy new stuff all the time because other things are "lost." It's their responsibility!

Bonus: You set YOURSELF up for weekend mornings of sleeping in once your child can get their own breakfast and find their own toys to play!



Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

Enforcing Consequences:

Children at this stage are too big and too smart for abrupt “Because I said so!” types of responses, although that’s never really a productive answer anyway. They are desperate to understand the world around them.

Be clear in your behavioral expectations before every activity—

whether a special event or just bedtime. Establish a mutual agreement with your child that you and both abide by.

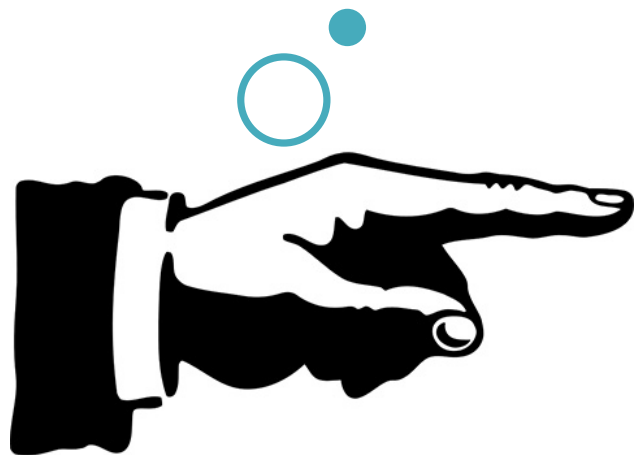
For example, when you start the bedtime routine, establish up front how many minutes of reading, how many minutes of silly time, then comes brushing the teeth with no whining, crying, or complaining, then right to bed. Adjust as necessary for whatever else your bedtime routine includes.

The consequence of breaking your agreement must be established ahead of time as well. You can even let them come up with the consequences themselves, so long as you agree they are equitable.

Your child can now understand needs vs. wants. Everything that isn’t food, shelter, health, and school is a privilege. And the loss of privileges is a comparable and fair consequence of breaking your agreements.

Family Leadership Summary:

1. Regularly have “the talk” where you and your child mutually establish expectations and consequences for their behavior.
2. Continue to adapt their space with their growing bodies and capabilities.
3. Expand their responsibilities with more detailed multistep tasks.
4. What may seem as mundane tasks to you are often powerful learning tools for your child. Most activities are still quite new to them. Exposure to new activities can spark curiosity and passion in them they may never have otherwise expressed.
5. Introduce the concept of needs versus wants.



Two: Lessons for 4-8 Years Old

What Can My Child Do?

EXERCISE

Below are some examples of what kids 4 to 8 years old can realistically accomplish. Initially your guidance is needed. As they mature of course, they will be able to complete the tasks on their own. The results won't be perfect but the intention and practice of the behavior is most important. Use the space on the right to add your own notes about where your child excels and where he or she may need some extra support.

4-5 years old possibilities ...

all tasks from previous plus ...

- fold towels/washcloths
- pair socks
- put clothing in drawers
- button and hang up shirts
- make bed
- dry and put away dishes/silverware
- dust furniture
- make snacks

6-8 years old possibilities ...

all tasks from previous plus ...

- self-care (washing, teeth brushing, etc.)
- clean the dryer trap and dispose of lint
- add detergent and load washer
- transfer wet wash to dryer or clothesline
- empty dishwasher
- vacuum/sweep/mop floors
- peel simple vegetables and make a simple salad
- help pack school lunch
- collect wastebaskets around the house

Notes and Ideas



CHAPTER 03

9-12 Years Old

“Don't raise your kids to have more than you had. Raise them to be more than you were.”

- Unknown author

Three

Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

A child getting older means expanded opportunities to share responsibilities within the home. Your child sees what you do every day and is beginning to understand just how much it takes to keep the house running smoothly. At the same time, they are also trying to be more independent.

Now is the time to feed this desire for more independence by allowing them to fully take the reins on some of the household chores. Will they all be done perfectly and just how you would do them? Probably not, but they are beginning to understand there are consequences for the choices they make at this age. If they don't have any clean clothes because they didn't do their own laundry, they'll make sure they get it done the next time.



Useful Developmental Milestones:

- Between 8 and 9 years old, the brain has matured so that children may start to solve problems in a logical fashion.

... **Let them practice their new skills and help around the house by helping you rearrange a closet or the fridge like a giant puzzle.**
- Between 9 and 11 years old, children often start to journal or keep a diary.

... **Give them memorable things to write about with creative experiences, positive reinforcement, and personal respect.**
- Between 11 and 12 years old, children are capable of thinking hypothetically.

... **Begin challenging your children with ideas of if/then situations. "If you don't remember to bring your lunch to school, I'm not available to help. What will you do instead?"**
- Between roughly 10 and 12 years old, conflict and negative emotions continue as puberty sets in.

... **Establish yourself as a mentor and trusted source of information about physical and emotional changes. Remind your kids that their peers are likely having the same struggles.**

Three: Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

Do This for Success

1. Explore the chores. Is your child doing any of the things in the home that need to get done, simply because it's good for the family? (Putting their clothes away when they are 6 or 7 is helpful for them. Putting all the laundry away is good for the family.)

EXAMPLE:

If there are jobs that your child is capable of doing or learning that they are not currently doing, certify them! Teach them how to do the new thing and then fold it into what they are already responsible for.

Putting away everyone's laundry might be the expanded step. Sweeping the patio or maintaining the plants would also be next steps. Follow your child's inclinations or enthusiasms for learning and you may find an expert begin to emerge.

Family Leadership Tip:

If your child shows enthusiasm over a particular task or range of tasks and can safely complete them on their own, engage trusted neighbors or nearby family members for more opportunities for your child to help.

This expanded challenge can spark conversations about being a good neighbor, citizenship, or ways to care for elders. In the beginning, recognition of effort is the main focus rather than praise or criticism for the quality of achievement.

In other words, it's the thought that counts.



Three: Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

2. Money, money, money. This is where the consequences meet the road! Let your child know that they are responsible for the upkeep, maintenance, and care of their things. If something is irresponsibly lost or broken, the consequence is that they will be responsible for replacing the item themselves with their own money.

EXAMPLE:

To help your child understand this in a more concrete form, pick an item from among their possessions and let them know how much it cost, roughly. Ask, “Do you currently have the money to replace it, should the need arise?”

While still too young to go out and get a job, come up with a list of tasks together that would need to be done in addition to their regular responsibilities that would allow them to earn the money to buy a replacement.



Family Leadership Tip:

With so much happening through virtually invisible electronic transfers and credit or debit cards, it's easy for kids to never really absorb the idea there is actual currency exchanged for the material goods in their lives.

Don't be afraid to talk about your job and how you earn money or provide other resources for the family. Your time is also a valuable commodity. It can be valuable to share personal stories from your own youth that helped you understand the value of money.

Three: Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

3. Come and get it. Now comfortable in the kitchen, having worked with you to prep meals in the past, have your child contribute to the family by planning and cooking a meal for the family once a week. Don't expect French gourmet—unless that's what they've been helping you prep, in which case, lucky you! Expect them to do as you've done together. Support them and don't complain, just as you ask of them when they sit down to eat a dinner you've prepared.

EXAMPLE:

1. Give your child a cookbook and let them find a meal they feel they can make and would like to eat.
2. Have them write a list of items they will need and add it to the household grocery list. Take them on a special trip just for the items they will need to prepare their meal.
3. Have them figure out when they should start cooking and if they need to do any prep work the day before.
4. Let them know you are there if they need help with anything and then sit back and let them cook.

Family Leadership Tip:

If you or your child doesn't enjoy cooking, try this exercise with another task like those listed below. Research what is needed either in a book, on the internet, or ask a skillful neighbor or relative. Make a list, go on a special trip just for those items, and let your child execute the task with only as much help as they request or is required for safety. The purpose here is to practice thinking ahead, identify challenges, experience the joy of accomplishment, and learn from mistakes.

- Plant a small garden
- Build a birdhouse
- Plan a family picnic at the park
- Camp overnight in the backyard
- Plan for a sleepover at a friend's house
- Participate in a science fair

Three: Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

Success Story

Dishes are a constant battle in our house, as I'm sure they are in many houses. Whenever I feel like I'm on top of them, having just finished getting them loaded in the dishwasher or put away, I come back into the kitchen to find the sink full again. So, I decided to have our 11-year-old move to the next level, from doing her own dishes to doing the family dishes after dinner.

We clear the table as a family and put leftovers away and then our girls finish up. Our 7-year-old wipes off the table and our 11-year-old takes care of the dishes. This one change may not seem like a lot, especially since it is just after dinner, but it has drastically reduced the dishes left in the sink and has allowed me a few extra minutes at night to spend some time with my husband before we start bedtime routines. It has also given my 11-year-old a sense of contributing more to the family and a leadership opportunity as she works with her younger sister to make sure things are cleaned up after dinner. It's a win all around.

~ Former [Leading Your Child to Success](#) Parent

Three: Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

The End Goal

With every passing year, your child's abilities will grow, assuming you continue to set the bar higher and higher. No 12-year-old wants to be doing the same thing as when they were 4, so you must continue to teach and challenge what you expect of the child.

You are now in this phase with your child of letting them take on the responsibilities, in their entirety, of which they perhaps only did part of in the past. This sets them up brilliantly to practice their problem-solving and sequential thinking. Having this process to fall back on sets them up for success the rest of their lives for working through anything that comes before them.

Natural consequences and making mistakes are part of the learning process. Your child will learn more from them than you realize. Allow them to happen. That doesn't mean you can't be there for support. If your child asks for help, give them guidance, suggestions, or instruction and then let them get back to their task at hand. They will realize you are there for them and that you trust them to get the job done.

From the ages of 9 to 12, children are gaining their own sense of identity and perspective but are very much dependent on parents for transportation to and from activities, clothing, food, and so much more. All of these provide a tool for parents to use in enforcing consequences.

For example, if your preteen is supposed to attend to one of their family responsibilities (laundry, dishes, trash), but ignores it because they are "too busy", then the next time they need you to take them to somewhere they will, unfortunately, find that you are "too busy" to do so. Of course, your preteen will provide all of the reasons why you need to take them to their activity. But, remember, it's their issue, not yours. Next time it comes to them fulfilling their responsibilities, they will remember this instance and get it done.



Three: Lessons for 9-12 Years Old

Enforcing Consequences:

At this stage, success is determined by a consistent response or reaction from you. Preteens need to know their boundaries are firm but that within those boundaries, they can explore and experiment.

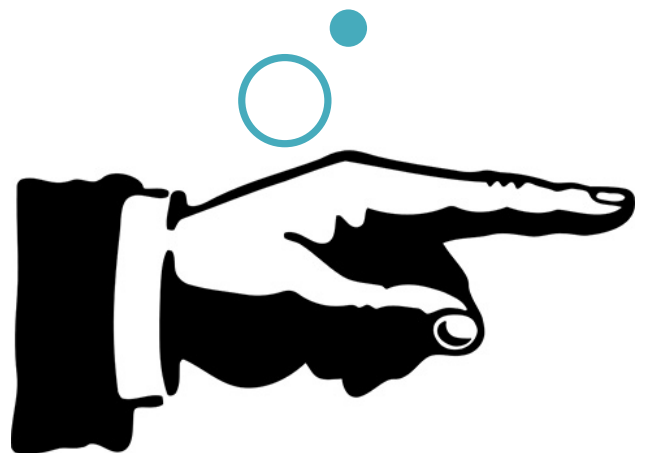
If it's their job to do their laundry but they don't want to wash them how you showed them, that's their call. When they come out with whites that turned pink because they didn't separate their colors or washed with warm water instead of cold, they'll know why you told them to wash colors separate from whites and be sure to follow your directions next time.

Although there will still be times when you'll have to enforce the consequences of a broken agreement, **natural consequences will become a major factor in the development of your child. Let them.** And when your child is dealing with the repercussions of one of these consequences, feel free to commiserate with them over what happened.

Let them know you are there for support, to help them figure out what went wrong, or just be there and listen. And when they do something well, acknowledge it and help them celebrate. But let them own the situation. Make sure you stay a supportive bystander.

Family Leadership Summary:

1. Your child is looking for more independence. Allow them to have a bit more responsibility by completing family chores on their own.
2. Look at the family chores with your child, and decide on a new one for them to learn. Teach them how to do this new chore and then add it to the things they are responsible for.
3. If your child's things are not cared for properly, require that they pay for replacing or repairing them.
4. Allow your child more freedom in the kitchen to plan and prepare a meal. Let them take over cooking dinner one day a week.
5. Allow natural consequences to happen and help teach your child the ramifications of certain actions, positive or negative.



What Can My Child Do?

EXERCISE

Below are some examples of what kids 9 to 12 years old can realistically accomplish. Initially your guidance is needed. The results won't be perfect but the intention and practice of the behavior is most important. Use the space on the right to add your own notes about where your child excels and where he or she may need some extra support.

9-12 years old possibilities ...

- all tasks from previous plus ...
- change bedsheets
- pack their own suitcase
- participate in household repairs (painting/plumbing/window cleaning)
- assist with younger siblings (feeding/dressing/entertaining/teaching)
- independently pack school lunch
- carry in groceries and put away
- sew buttons and make simple repairs
- welcome and care for guests
- prepare simple meals (coffee and tea preparation/meal planning)
- basic first aid
- care for animals (walking/cleaning up messes/grooming)
- independent yard maintenance (fruit picking/raking leaves/gardening)
- make purchases up to +/- \$5.00
- chores for neighbors
- write thank-you notes for gifts and generous acts

Notes and Ideas



CHAPTER 04

13-18 Years Old

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”

- *Winston Churchill*

Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

Even though your teen may feel they are all grown up, this stage in life is no different than any other age range. There are physical and emotional changes: There is greater recognition of how others see them and how they see themselves. Social interactions impact who they are and how they behave. And they have a greater understanding of personal accountability and a sense of responsibility for their own future. The testing of boundaries and rules that started before becoming a teen will continue.

As a parent, your biggest opportunity to help your teen is by being consistent with your expectations, becoming more of a coach and mentor who recognizes that they will learn from mistakes, and realizing that there will be words they blurt out that they will wish they hadn't said. They want to be and act like adults, but they also want the security of a loving and caring parent.

Useful Developmental Milestones:

- Between 12 and 14 years old, children are able to accept consequences and take responsibility for personal behavior. ... **Make sure important family rules have clear and agreed upon consequences. Your child should know what to expect if rules are broken.**
- Around 15 years old, children learn to develop strategies for dealing with the expression of emotions and frustration. ... **Help your child work through frustrating situations by first listening to what is said without offering solutions. Then ask them if they want further help or just a hug.**
- Around 16 years old, children start examining the beliefs of others. ... **Explain your beliefs and allow your children to ask questions. Be open to exploring their questions, and let them know why you believe the things you do.**
- Around 17 to 18 years old, children begin to create checklists for tasks and plan ahead for completing *long-term* projects. ... **Select a project around the house or another family activity (like a vacation) that requires more than just a simple action. Have your child develop a list of actions required, the time line for each, and an estimated cost for each action/activity. Review the plan with them and ask questions. Remember, this is their plan and if they forgot something, the learning of what was missed or forgotten will be an important lesson.**

Four: Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

Do This for Success

- 1. Give your child more responsibility with more detailed tasks.** All of the stories and metrics we've shared from earlier sections still apply to teens. Now, however, they can be trusted with more complexity and more authority in the way their responsibilities are managed.

EXAMPLE:

Reliable transportation is a critical component of independence. When your child learns to drive, gets their license, and then asks to borrow your car, make sure they know how to take care of it, and have them start to help with the maintenance and extra wear and tear they'll be adding to it.

Show them how to check the oil, transmission fluid, tire pressure, window cleaner, engine coolant, and how to change a tire. If you don't know how to do those things either, have some family bonding time over YouTube videos or make sure they know how to call AAA!

They can also vacuum the car, wash the windows, and wash and wax it. If they would rather take the car to the car wash, they can pay for it ... not you!

If your teen is more likely to rely on a **ride-hailing service, bus, metro, or subway**, go through the associated costs together. They can still be responsible for adding money to associated online accounts and purchasing necessary passes or tickets. Make sure they're comfortable with schedules, maps, what to do in case of closures, and, most importantly, common sense safety precautions.



Four: Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

2. Time for a job. There are many after-school and/or summertime opportunities for earning money. A job will also help with time management as they navigate their extracurricular activities and homework schedule.

Establish a Purpose for Work

First jobs can be a huge eye-opener for many kids. They are often shocked to learn about minimum wage, taxes, and just how exhausting a long day on your feet can be. Your family values will come into play very soon if your teen incorrectly decides they are “too good” for a minimum wage job.

“Flipping burgers” and retail jobs can be immensely valuable life experiences. Besides providing income, they are opportunities to learn about teamwork (both successful and inefficient), customer service, scheduling, sanitation, and marketing.

Help them figure out their skills and where they might want to apply. Are they interested in working somewhere associated with a hobby or possible future career, or are they working toward a purchase and just interested in making the most money they can? Either way, no person is too good for any job.



Prepare for the Right Job

Help prepare your child for their job interview beforehand. You can practice likely questions together, make sure they understand respectful and appropriate attire, help them learn about the business, and how to follow up after the interview.

However, after you've prepared together, get out of their way. No helicoptering for you! What they ultimately choose to wear, speak about, whether or not they show up on time, and how or if they choose to follow up are all their own responsibility.

Four: Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

3. Take the money talk to the next level. When your child gets their first job, the moment is right to teach them how to manage their money in a more in-depth way.

Get Their Accounts in Order

Once they are out of the house, they will need to know how to save, create and stick to a budget, use a credit/debit card, and how to manage their credit score. Loan terms, late/overdraft fees, and how interest accrues are all necessary items to discuss. It doesn't all have to happen at once. Now would be a great time to start.

Take your child into your bank and have them open a checking account and savings account (if they don't already have one). When they get their first paycheck, show them how to deposit it (fill out a deposit slip, use the ATM, mobile deposit, or direct deposit if available).

Talk with them about putting 10 percent into their savings account and why it's important to have one. When the time comes to pay their phone bill, show them how to fill out a check or, more likely, pay it online.

Introduce Reality

Help your child learn the true cost of their possessions by having them start to pay for the gas they use in the car when they borrow it or the cost of their cell phone plan. They will understand the true cost of something by the number of hours it takes them to earn the money to pay for said item.

They will also begin to get a concrete sense of taxes and just how much they actually earn for their hours.



Four: Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

Family Leadership Tip:

Avoid doing everything online. While you can of course set up accounts and introduce financial concepts all online, that's not the point of the experience here. As a family leader, you have the opportunity to connect your teen with something real.

A real experience at a societal institution like a bank or local credit union is a far more visceral connection than clicking a few buttons and waiting for a confirmation email. Let your teen see there are people behind that otherwise anonymous online account page.

Relationships are what build confidence, trust, and respect. Knowing that you can go into a financial institution and ask questions, seek options, complain, and give positive feedback are powerful tools.

This is part of helping your child connect with their community in addition to establishing their relationship with money.

Four: Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

4. Introduce philanthropy and community service. Words are hardly ever enough to instill a solid sense of perspective in a young person. They need experiences to truly understand the value of their possessions.

Help Them know the Difference between Needs and Wants

There is more to personal responsibility than valuing your possessions. Respecting your health, your grades, your word, and your potential are also part of being a responsible person. Knowing the difference between needing something and just wanting it can be a tough lesson to absorb.

Cash in hand from a job can be a fun and empowering feeling for a young person. If that job becomes your teen's primary source of income, then they will certainly feel the impact of their time in exchange for money. They, as we adults often do, may succumb to the occasional feeling that they never have enough money to get what they want. To give them, and ourselves, some perspective in these situations, try exposing your teen to volunteer opportunities where they may see what truly not having enough can mean.



Volunteering is not just for bolstering a college resume. If chosen correctly, community service opportunities can enrich your child's understanding of the world and what a person or family actually needs to survive. With some luck, the experiences may burst the idea that always having the latest digital device or a fancier car is worth their stress. Maybe they will also feel the impact of supporting their community, the environment, or any other given passion project.

There's nothing wrong with simply wanting something and treating yourself to it. The ability to distinguish between needs and wants, however, can go a long way in helping them make good responsible choices for the rest of their lives.

Success Story

At 16 my daughter wanted her own car. Luckily, she had an older brother that gave his car to her for free when he went off to college. While she was initially thrilled at getting a free car, her balloon deflated a bit when I reminded her that car costs include not only the initial purchase but also registration, maintenance, gas, and insurance. We decided she would completely pay for her own gas and help with everything else. That meant she needed a job.

She was active in a number of after-school activities already and worried she wouldn't be able to find a job that would allow her to continue them and work enough hours to cover the costs of the car. One of these activities was twirling baton for her high school. Having established her priorities of wanting to continue with twirling, she made what I thought was a brilliant decision to see if she could turn her skill into a job.

Together we made a plan regarding the things she would need to do to start her own group, what she should charge, and how often she'd be able to give lessons. Then she went out to all of the middle schools in the area and talked with them about creating an after-school twirling group. She found a school that was interested, made up flyers, and had her first introductory lesson.

She ended up with a group of ten or so girls that she taught baton to and eventually took them to competitions and had them march in parades. When she went off to college, she even found another twirler to take over the group!

She made enough money to pay for her car and got the experience of teaching and training others to do something she loved.

~ Former [Leading Your Child to Success](#) Parent

Four: Lessons for 13-18 Years Old

The End Goal

Your ultimate challenge as the parent of a young adult is to help ensure they are ready to be on their own with the skills, knowledge, insight, and the support they need to achieve their dreams. No doubt they may make different decisions than you might, but giving them more latitude and responsibility over time will help them sort through choices and options with relative confidence and trust in their own abilities.

When it feels tough to let your children try things on their own and potentially fail at them, remember that for the rest of their adult lives you will not be around for every tough emotional situation or urgent financial one. They must learn to trust their own instincts and decision-making capabilities. You doing all the work while they're young robs them of that potential.

Your most influential years are from birth to 18 when your child is first forming their impressions of family life, financial and personal responsibility, and emotional maturity. They will have the tools to make good decisions as adults because they had the opportunity to stumble and rebound when they were young.

That doesn't mean that it's free rein for them to do whatever they want while in your home. Set the boundaries and then let them run. Most of the time they will succeed, but sometimes they will find themselves grappling with a difficult issue, with no time and/or no money, and then ask you to bail them out. You can provide perspective but not solutions. The more they have to find solutions to their problems, the better they will be when they are truly on their own.



Enforcing Consequences:

Enforcing consequences for children typically comes in the form of punishment or restrictions. As children get older, their cognitive (reasoning, thinking, and remembering) capabilities along with their emotional (feelings and sensibilities) capabilities develop, and they are able to comprehend why a restriction or punishment is applied to them. They did something wrong and they must suffer the consequences.

At some point, however, their cognitive mind also helps them understand that the restriction or punishment will pass, then life goes on. The challenge becomes re-engaging the emotional impact so that the consequences have a greater influence on long-term behavior.

Four important things you can remember at this age are patience, consistency, recognizing that your teen will make mistakes, AND they need to be able to struggle in finding solutions to their mistakes or issues along the way.

As a parent, your role at this age is coach and mentor, not solution provider. The more practice your teen is afforded to work through issues and determining solutions while at home, the more capable and confident they will be to do so as adults.

Family Leadership Summary:

1. Your child is ready for more detailed tasks. Give them the opportunity to show their capability after you've instructed them how. Explain how completing ongoing maintenance can save money in the long run.
2. Time management is more important as your teen takes on more and more activities. Make a plan together about how to best manage their time and keep track of important tasks.
3. Have your teen open a checking and/or savings account once they get their first job. They will better learn the ins and outs of finances when dealing with their own money.
4. Have your teen create a budget that includes putting money into a savings account. Pull out the family finances and show them firsthand how the family money is handled.
5. Talk with your child about consequences for not following the family rules. You can ask for their input on what they believe a consequence should be, but you have the final decision.

What Can My Child Do?

EXERCISE

Below are some examples of what youth 13 to 18 years old can realistically accomplish. Depending on how early you introduced related tasks, the results may or may not be at a satisfactory level just yet. Use the space on the right to add your own notes about where your child excels and where he or she may need some extra support.

13-15 years old possibilities ...

all tasks from previous plus ...

- volunteering in the community
- make purchases at the store
- stay home alone
- get a job
- deposit/withdraw money at the bank
- follow detailed recipes in the kitchen
- contribute financially to expensive items they want
- reflect on their achievements and failures focusing on improvement
- research and contribute to family vacation ideas
- safely use most cleaning products
- create schedules and prioritize commitments
- treat elders with consistent respect

16+ years old possibilities ...

all tasks from previous plus ...

- drive
- most adult behaviors

Notes and Ideas

The Next Step

We hope you found this resource valuable. Visit us at Birth2Work.org for other fantastic materials, activities, courses, and family leadership support! Our goal is to help you stay informed and stay engaged.



Leading Your Child to Success is our online master class on family leadership. It walks you through the steps of creating a complete, long-term plan for the success of your family that is true to you.

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